

OPENING STATEMENT
Before The Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee
February 5, 2009

Good afternoon, Senator Looney, Representative Janowski and members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee. I am Theresa Hopkins-Staten, and it is an honor for me to appear before you today as a nominee of Governor M. Jodi Rell for reappointment as a voting member of the State Board of Education.

While professionally trained as an attorney, education has always been a passion and priority of mine. And it continues to be my fervent belief that providing every child with a high-quality education is one of the greatest contributions that we can make to our society and to our state.

As my resume reflects, my past career included managing a foundation and education was an area of priority. This enabled me to provide financial support to a variety of initiatives that helped students throughout Connecticut. One grant that I continue to monitor was made in 2004 to R. J. Kinsella Magnet School of the Arts in Hartford. This grant funded a program called PEAC, an acronym for Parental Involvement, Etiquette Enrichment, Academic Enrichment and Character Development. At the time Kinsella received this grant; the school had not made adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act, ranked 33 out of 33, and was slated for closure. As a result of a tenacious and determined principal by the name of Pamela Totten-Alvarado, a devoted staff of high-quality teachers and administrators and yes, additional resources, Kinsella experienced a dramatic transformation. Today, Kinsella is ranked 16 out of 42 and was recognized by ConnCAN as a top 10 Connecticut school based on the academic improvements made by its students. Additionally, Ms. Totten-Alvarado received the coveted Ambassador Award from MetLife Foundation for the school's notable achievements.

Clearly, there are success stories; however, more work is required to close unacceptable achievement gaps that continue to widen among students who differ in gender, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

Over the past four years, I have had the privilege to work on the State Board of Education with colleagues equally passionate about educating the 575,000 students attending our public schools. I also serve on the Board's Policy Development Committee and Connecticut Technical High School System Committee. We have worked on, among other matters, a five-year comprehensive plan, developing

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policies to ensure our students can successfully compete in the globalized 21st century, secondary school reform, and have reviewed and approved several district improvement plans. While much has been accomplished by the Board, there is still more work to be done. I am up to the challenge and would be honored to continue serving the people of this great state.

I appreciate your attention and welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.